

## **SWINDON CHILDREN'S TRUST BOARD**

**THURSDAY, 14 JUNE 2012**

PRESENT: Liz Holmes in the Chair, Councillor Doreen Dart, Councillor David Renard, Jo Garton (Head teachers), Valerie Johnstone (Governors), Ruth Fitzjohn (Swindon Primary Care Trust), Louise Tapper (Swindon Primary Care Trust), Peter Wells (Diocese), John Gilbert (Group Director), John Popowicz (Fire Service), Mike Howard (LSCB), Jill Annal (Jobcentre Plus), Liz Mearns (General Practitioners) and Doug Morris (Parent & Carers Advisory Group)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rochelle Russell, Julie Tridgell (Head teachers), Peter Crockett (Head Teachers & Chair of Schools Forum), Hilary Walker (GWH NHS Foundation Trust), Teresa Harding (CAMS) and Riana Taylor (Probation Service)

### **1. Minutes**

Resolved – That, subject to the inclusion of Ruth Fitzjohn (Primary Care Trust) as an attendee, the minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2012 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Minute 46 - School Admission Arrangements and Education Transport Policy. The Chair (Liz Holmes) advised that following the motion to Council in February 2012, the Transport Policy was currently out for consultation regarding the possibility of restoring parents' ability to attend and address the Education Transport Appeal Sub-Committee. A report on the outcome of the consultation would be submitted to Cabinet on 11 July 2012 for a decision.

### **2. Public Question Time**

The following questions were asked by Mr Paul Sunners.

#### **Question 1.**

With reference to the Children Services Performance Report (Agenda Item 4) para.2.7.1 Youth Engagement service Activity.

The information contained within this report clearly highlights the extent to which 'youth work' in Swindon has become focussed on individual case-work with an increasingly narrow focus on young people with specific needs. Inevitably, such focus has significant resource implications for a diminishing number of youth workers and any attempt to resurrect a robust youth service available to all young people in Swindon.

In light of the long-standing concern in relation to youth provision in Swindon, will the SCTB exert influence on Swindon Borough Council to adopt a creative approach to the principles contained within 'Positive for Youth – a new approach to cross-government policy for young people aged 13 to 19' a Government policy published in December 2011?

**Observation comment to support Question 2.**

Reference 2.7.10 Exclusions. Based on the data presented in paragraph 2 the published percentage increase is inaccurate and should read 31.5%. However, this information would appear to be erroneous based on exclusion data contained within the 'schools on-line weekly update' (28<sup>th</sup> May 2012) which clearly indicates that the total number of fixed term exclusions for the same period i.e. September 2011 to March 2012 was 918. If the previous year's total is correct i.e. 657, this means that the increase in FTE's is 39.7%. To assist any focussed analysis of the data pertaining to Fixed Term Exclusions it may have been helpful to if the 'schools on-line' information had been added as an appendix.

**Question 2.**

In light of the Exclusions information presented in paragraph 2.7.10 which reports a significant increase in fixed term exclusions, does this matter merit closer scrutiny?

The Chair (Liz Holmes) responded to question 1 by advising that the Board received regular reports from the Youth Service and was therefore able to monitor the scope of services provided and its ability to maintain services.

The Head of Commissioning (Sue Wald) responded to question 2 by agreeing that the percentage increase in fixed term exclusions referred to in paragraph 2.7.10 should be 31.5%.

Mrs Wald further explained that when the report was written it was based on the latest available data. This information was affected by when the data was actually entered by individual schools. To get an accurate comparison between the years, it would be necessary to use the official annual figures. Details were regularly reported to the Board as part of the monitoring process and to give an indication of the trend in numbers.

The Head of Commissioning – Economy/Attainment (Paddy Bradley) advised that the number of exclusions was increasing generally. In addition, the majority of secondary schools in the town were now academies and as most exclusions were from secondary schools, this had an impact on the data as academies had a different reporting process. Work was continuing to find a way of providing an overall picture of the situation within the town. It was suggested that the appropriate Scrutiny Committee be requested to investigate the issue.

Mr Sunners commented on the need for an accurate analysis of the figures, in the light of 'Every Child Matters' and for the need to provide both the percentages and the actual numbers as statistics did not show the whole picture. He also drew the Board's attention to the publication 'Positive for Youth – a new approach to cross-government policy for young people aged 13 to 19' and recommended that the Council adopt a creative approach to the principles it contained regarding the provision of youth services.

**3. Children Services Performance Report**

The Head of Commissioning (Sue Wald) presented a report on performance in Children Services through performance updates to the end of February 2012 and for March 2012 where data was routinely reported and available.

Mrs Wald commented on the report, highlighting the significant improvement in the prevalence of breastfeeding at six to eight weeks and the uptake of the human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccination, which at 94.8% was the third highest in the country.

There was a considerable increase in the number of children in care over the last year, from 240 to 263 but the precise reason for this was unknown. An investigation into the reasons was continuing and a full analysis would be submitted to the September meeting. The Head of Children and Families (Sara Tough) remarked that the increase was not unusual as nationally there was an increase in numbers.

Jo Garton (SAPH) referred to the details regarding the completion of initial assessments and stated that it was not easy to understand. Mrs Tough advised that this statistical information would shortly be redundant following a recommendation in the Munro report to remove all timescales. The data was simply a process measure and gave no indication of whether all the children who required an assessment had actually started the process. A new performance framework was currently out for consultation and a local policy would be compiled once that was completed. In the future there would be a different set of data to work to, one of which would be the average time taken for a child to have a complete assessment. Another important aspect was the actual provision of a required service

Comment was made that the Munro Report focused on quality of provision whereas current data did not reflect any quality aspect. Mrs Tough informed the Board that a Principle Officer, Social Work had recently been appointed and they would be working on ways to provide data on the quality of provision with a report on proposals or an update coming to the September meeting at the earliest.

The Chair (Liz Holmes) referred to the data on exclusions and the need for more detail. The Head of Commissioning – Economy/Attainment (Paddy Bradley) commented on the number of independent schools within the Borough and the possible need for the same number of sets of data.

Resolved - The Swindon Children's Trust Board:

- (1) Notes the performance data for Children's Services to the end of February 2012, with March 2012 updates, where data was routinely reported and available and provides comments as above.
- 2) Notes the additional, more detailed information regarding the number of children in care, initial assessments and adoptions.
- 3) Welcomes the significant improvements made and congratulates the staff for their achievements.
- 4) Requests the Head of Commissioning – Economy/Attainment (Paddy Bradley) to provide as detailed a report as possible on the exclusion data, including figures as well as percentages, on exclusions over the past year for all schools within the Borough.
- 5) Requests that the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee investigate the question of pupil's exclusion from schools in order to gain an accurate picture of the level and the reasons for exclusion within the town.

#### **4. Ofsted Thematic Inspection of Protecting Disabled Children**

The Head of Children and Families (Sara Tough) submitted a report with information on the outcome of the Ofsted Thematic Inspection on protecting children with disabilities, held on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> April 2012 and the action plan that had been developed to respond to and learn from the feedback that was received from Ofsted.

Mrs Tough stressed that this was not a formal inspection but one of a series of 12 inspections carried out across the country to inform the final inspection report. The inspection focused on multi-agency working and provided an insight into the process for future inspections. Although there was no formal report, the inspection did identify some areas for improvement and several areas of good practice, some of which have been followed up by Ofsted to inform national good practice. An action plan had been developed in response to the feedback that had been received from Ofsted and this would be monitored by the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Resolved – The Board welcomes the progress that has been made in the safeguarding of children and notes the feedback that was received from the Ofsted Inspector who undertook the Thematic Inspection of Protecting Disabled Children.

#### **5. Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services**

The Board considered a report by the Head of Commissioning (Sue Wald) regarding issues arising from the Ofsted inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children in December 2009 and the preparations for inspections under the new Ofsted Inspection Framework.

The Chair (Liz Holmes) referred to the Ofsted Summit taking place in July on the new inspection framework and encouraged all members or a representative to attend. Invitations had already been issued but she would arrange for a further notification to be sent to members.

Resolved – The Swindon Children's Trust Board:

- 1) Notes the actions that have been taken to address issues raised at the Ofsted inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children in 2009.
- 2) Endorses the work that is being undertaken to prepare for the new Ofsted Inspection Framework, noting that the focus of the new Ofsted inspections is around child protection, rather than on the broader 'safeguarding' arena.

#### **6. Minutes of Children's Joint Commissioning Board**

The Head of Commissioning (Sue Wald) submitted a report with the minutes of the Children's Joint Commissioning Board meeting of 20 March 2012 and with information on the new governance arrangements for the Children's and Adults Joint Commissioning Boards.

Resolved – That the report and the minutes of the Children's Joint Commissioning Board meeting of 20 March 2012 be noted.

#### **7. Minutes of Local Safeguarding Children's Board**

The Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) (Mike Howard) introduced the report and commented on the minutes of the meeting on 13 March 2012.

Reference was made to the adoption process and John Gilbert (Board Director Commissioning) advised that he had met with the new Judge for Adoption proceedings who recognised that there were delays in the system and wished to refresh some of the Court processes. Andrew Ferguson (Solicitor) remarked on the new instructions that had just been issued in respect of Care proceedings with the aim of reducing the time taken. He further explained that delays in Court proceedings could arise because of the availability of magistrates or experts that were required or because of delays in providing information to the Court. The reduction in the number of magistrates and clerks also had an impact. It could take up to two years to deal with a Care Order and then further time for the adoption process.

Ruth Fitzjohn (Primary Care Trust) referred to the item on sexual exploitation and enquired about the level of the problem in Swindon. Mr Howard advised that no figures were available at present but the LSCB was working on an analysis of the situation. The main focus of the Board was to raise awareness of the issue and to make people conscious of the signs to look out for.

Mr Howard also commented on the new Ofsted inspection framework and its greater focus on child protection. In future, training records would need to include information on how the training has helped the individual and how the new knowledge is being implemented. It was suggested that prior to any training, the person should be asked what they wanted to gain from it, to avoid repeating any course that would not improve their learning.

The Chair (Liz Holmes) advised that she had met with Mr Howard to discuss how the Swindon Children's Trust Board and the LSCB could work together to ensure that all aspects of child protection were covered and that nothing was missed by either of the two Boards.

Resolved - That the report and the minutes of the Local Safeguarding Children Board meeting on 13 March 2012 be noted.

## **8. Parent Participation Progress Update**

Doug Morris (Parent and Carers Advisory Group) presented a report with an update on the progress made with Parent Participation in Swindon since the last report in March 2010.

Liz Mearns (General Practitioner) referred to a meeting that had taken place between medical practitioners and parents of children with cerebral palsy concerning the length of time taken to obtain a diagnosis and how this could be improved. She suggested that the Parent and Carers Advisory Group could help with the process and should become involved. Mr Morris confirmed that some diagnosis could take up to two years and was very stressful. This was not only a health issue as it also affected a child's education.

John Gilbert (Board Director Commissioning) remarked that the Clinical Commissioning Board wanted to help general practitioners (GP) navigate their way through the system and it wanted to investigate ways of having a more systematic approach to the process. Dr Mearns advised that a delay could arise because the

condition was very rare and the GP needed to find out how to access the route to getting a proper diagnosis or it could be because of the time needed to get a result from biological tests. In these instances, it would be helpful if a way could be found to provide assistance before any final diagnosis.

The Chair (Liz Holmes) was pleased that the Group had continued following its separation from Aiming High as it provided invaluable support for parents and carers and its contribution to the Trust Board was much appreciated.

Resolved – That the Swindon Children's Trust Board:

- 1) Notes progress and work undertaken by Swindon Parents and Carers Advisory Group, as set out in Section 4 of the appendix to the report.
- 2) Endorses the further plans for developing the Parent and Carers Advisory Group as set out in Section 5 of the appendix to the report.

## **9. Referral from Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)**

The Head of Commissioning – Economy/Attainment (Paddy Bradley) introduced a report on the work of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE), which highlighted its concerns regarding access to Religious Education in the Borough.

Mr Bradley advised that all schools were required to teach Religious Education (RE) in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus, but it only formed part of the national curriculum in faith schools. SACRE's role was to monitor and support the provision of RE but with a steady decline in the number of schools entering pupils for exams, this was becoming more difficult.

The Board noted and supported the SACRE's proposal to write to all governing bodies and academy trusts to request information on the teaching of RE, but were concerned at the possible terminology. It was recognised that the locally agreed syllabus could be taught in various ways under numerous subject titles and it was anxious that any enquiry to schools should be made in the widest context possible.

Resolved – That the Board:

- 1) Notes and appreciates the work of the SACRE and its concerns regarding access to Religious Education in the Borough, and provides comments as above on the issues highlighted by the SACRE.
- 2) Supports the SACRE's proposal to write to all schools in the Borough regarding the teaching of RE but requests that the enquiry be made in the widest possible context in line with the comments set out above.

## **10. Date of Next Meeting**

The Board noted that the next meeting would take place on Thursday, 27 September 2012 at 5.00 p.m. in Committee Room 6, Civic Offices, Swindon.